

to balance the budget and increase investment in education and America's future.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. on the Pulliam Hall lawn. In his remarks, he referred to Jason Ervin, student, and Ted Sanders, chancellor, Southern Illinois University; and Mayor Neill Dillard of Carbondale.

Remarks on the First Anniversary of AmeriCorps and an Exchange With Reporters

September 12, 1995

The President. I am glad to be here today with Senator Pell, Congressman Reed, Congressman Kennedy, Eli Segal, Senator Wofford, and the remarkable representative group of leaders from the State of Rhode Island, including leaders of the majority of the institutions of higher education there; business leaders, Mr. Fish, Mr. Romney, thank you for coming from Massachusetts; and young AmeriCorps volunteers; and of course, Senator Wofford. And Nick Lowry has been a great supporter of AmeriCorps from its beginning.

We are here to mark AmeriCorps' first year of accomplishment and to find ways to make it better in the second year when 25,000 Americans will be out serving their country and earning some money for their higher education.

AmeriCorps members have helped children to do better in school. They've helped to close crack houses. They've helped communities team up with police to keep themselves safe. They've cleaned mountain trails and urban waterways. And from Oklahoma City to south Florida, from the banks of the Mississippi to the streets of Los Angeles, whenever our people were faced with disaster in these last couple of years, AmeriCorps members have been there to help.

AmeriCorps has truly brought out the best in America. Behind this success is a partnership that cuts across every line and sector in our country, where young people and others who work in the communities, leaders in business, education, community service, and public service, work together to make lives better for ordinary Americans.

AmeriCorps members help our Nation as they help themselves. They earn money to help pay for college. And of course, some colleges are going even further. The Rhode Island colleges and universities here represented and those who are not here will be matching AmeriCorps scholarships and college loan repayments. And I want to thank all of them.

Meanwhile, CEO's, like Mitt Romney of Bain Capital in Boston, have urged others to follow their examples of support for AmeriCorps participation. Foundations like the Ford Foundation, which has contributed \$3 million as a challenge pool to community foundations, have also helped to stretch our Federal investment.

An investment in AmeriCorps goes far. A team of noted conservative economists found recently that every dollar of Federal money invested returns at least \$1.60 to \$2.60, and maybe even more, for the taxpayers in public benefits. And of course, that doesn't calculate the long-term benefit of the increased education of the young people who participate in AmeriCorps. AmeriCorps is about personal responsibility and community, about giving young people positive avenues to opportunity.

Now, the majority in Congress threatens to cut college scholarships and college loans and AmeriCorps. But in AmeriCorps we have a program that lifts our values and solves our problems; it helps send civic-minded, hard-working young people to college. That's the kind of thing America should do to build up and not tear down.

Tens of thousands of young Americans are lining up to serve their country in AmeriCorps. And I don't want Congress to close the door on them. I want the Republican majority to learn what the rest of our country now knows. Without regard to party, AmeriCorps works. If the congressional majority really wants to build more personal responsibility and expand opportunity only for those who are willing to help themselves, if they really want to rebuild a sense of community in America, then their principles and our common future should be put above politics. AmeriCorps should grow. It should not die.

I want to reemphasize that it is not necessary to balance the budget to destroy

AmeriCorps or even to cut it in half. It is absolutely not necessary. This is a good program, and I think we'll be around next year to celebrate the second anniversary and look toward the third year, thanks to people like all of you around this room. I thank you very, very much.

Q. Mr. President, do you think that the Republicans want to end the program simply because it's so closely associated with you and because it has been one of your head programs?

The President. I don't think they'd be that small. I think that would be an incredibly small thing to do. I don't think they'd be that small. You know, I don't speculate on people's motives. But I believe that some people in the Congress really don't believe that any spending program is as good as any tax cut. That's what I think. I think that—and I believe that any new thing that's been done—I happen to have been President the last 2 years—I think any new thing that's been done is in their mind an easy thing to eliminate if you want to balance the budget. But it is not necessary. We have given them a balanced budget plan. They don't have to cut this to balance the budget. This is a tiny, tiny budget item that does an enormous amount of good.

Q. They say that—[inaudible]—to the GAO report, I think, that's out now that shows that the amount of money that's actually spent per volunteer is a lot more than the \$4,000 that the White House says—

The President. Well, we have, you know, we have a lot of evidence that refutes that. I don't—and I'll be glad to give it to you; Mr. Segal can. But it's clear that this is an enormously popular program. The one thing the GAO didn't do is to consider all the people that are kicking into the program, they leverage the private money. And there's no calculation given to the extra economic benefit to the country from all these young people that are going on to school. But even on its own terms, I don't think it's right economically.

This has been a good deal for America. And there's not a community—yesterday I was in Carbondale, Illinois, in the American heartland, a small town with a good-sized university, where the young AmeriCorps vol-

unteers are working in the elementary school there. All these people are working people, and a phenomenal percentage of them are working poor people who live in this community. And they'd like to see their AmeriCorps volunteers stay. And they'd like to see them going on to school there. And I think we're going to give them the chance to do that.

Q. Mr. President, how optimistic are you of keeping the program alive?

The President. Very.

Q. I mean, are you finding a consensus among other Members of Congress to keep it going?

The President. First of all, there are a lot of Republicans that down deep in their heart want this program to live. And after all, we created this program with bipartisan support. I went out of my way in 1993 to say that I did not want any educational initiative created if we didn't have bipartisan support for it. I did not want this to be a partisan issue. And I have not made it a partisan issue.

And I just believe that we have to be more discriminating about what we eliminate. To go back to the question you asked, I honestly believe that, particularly in the House of Representatives, there are 100 to 150 Members that I believe that except for the national defense any tax cut is better than any spending program. But I think that's wrong. And we don't have to—we do not have to eliminate this to balance the budget. And I think I'll be able to make that point as we get into these budget negotiations. And I think—I think the program will survive, because it's a good, decent program; it's an effective program; and it has bipartisan support.

Q. Are you willing to sign on to the Republican spending limits without accepting their priorities as a possible compromise on the budget?

The President. Well, I don't know that that's a compromise. I have an alternative; they have an alternative. I picked up some kind of reading between the lines of some of the comments of the leadership and other prominent Members of Congress in the last couple of weeks, the possibility of some movement that might enable us to get together. I don't want a train wreck. I want a balanced budget in a fixed number of years

that has great credibility in the marketplace, and I believe we'll get it. I'm very hopeful.

Q. And will you sign a continuing resolution in the meantime?

The President. Oh, I hope we'll get a good continuing resolution. That's quite important. It's important that we not just walk away from our responsibilities.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:22 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Larry Fish, chairman and chief executive officer, Citizens Financial Group, and New York Jets football player Nick Lowry. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Teleconference on Education and an Exchange With Reporters

September 12, 1995

The President. Can you all hear me?

School Superintendents. Yes, yes.

The President. That's great. Well, I'm on the phone here with Secretary Riley. And I want to thank all you superintendents for joining me today on this conference call to discuss the importance of continuing our national commitment to education. All of you know better than I that America has just started back to school.

Over the last week I have met with chief executive officers from major corporations, such as IBM and TRW, with mayors and county executives from large and small cities, and yesterday with college students from 10 different universities in 5 States. And I have just come from a meeting with some of our young national service corps, AmeriCorps, participants, along with college presidents and business leaders who support their involvement. And everywhere I go, when I deal with people who are working with Americans who are struggling to make the most of their own lives or trying to help our country adjust to the global economy, I hear the same message: It is wrong for our economy to be growing with so many hardworking Americans' incomes not growing. And everywhere I hear the same response: The answer is to give people a better education, to give our young people

the tools they need to learn and to give all Americans a chance to build better lives.

That's why I presented to Congress a balanced budget, which shows that we can get rid of the deficit and still invest more in education and training, to put our young people and our future first. That's why we have committed ourselves to a greater investment in Head Start, to the Goals 2000 program that many of you are very familiar with, to decreasing class sizes through programs like Title I, to the Safe and Drug-Free Schools program.

These are not bureaucratic programs. These are programs that relate to the future of our children, the strength of our economy, and therefore the future of all the rest of us in America.

I know that it is easy to cut these programs here in Washington. We are a long way from the schools and the grassroots. You're a long way from the human consequences of those cuts. But these things actually mean something where all of you live and work. And that's what I want you to talk about.

For example, four schools in Portland, Oregon, helping 9th and 10th graders to reach higher standards in math and science, will lose their funding, just at the time when we know our young people are taking more advanced courses, doing more homework, and trying harder to measure up to global standards of excellence. Four hundred and fifty teaching assistants and other staff who help children with basic reading, writing, and math skills will have to be laid off in Miami. There are examples like this all across the country. That's why we've had such incredibly strong bipartisan business support for our education budget.

Joe Gorman, the chief executive officer of TRW, said last week that, and I quote, "Goals 2000 is critically important. Far more than dollars are involved. It provides incentives to States to change themselves within their educational systems." Lou Gerstner, the CEO of IBM, said, "Goals 2000 is the fragile beginning of the establishment of a culture of measuring standards and accountability in our country. We have to go way beyond Goals 2000, but if we lose Goals 2000 it is," and I quote, "an incredibly negative setback for our country."